A DEFENCE FOR MARIAGE OF Prestes, by Scripture and aunciente Writers.

Made by Johñ Ponet, Doctoure of Diuinitee.

Heb. 13.

Wedlocke is to be hadde in honoure amonge all men, and the bedde undefiled: As for whoorekepers, and aduouterers, God shal iudge them.

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To the Reader.

To pleaſe or diſpleaſe mens myndes, I myn'd not,
But mynde (as God knoweth) Goddes mynde to fulfyl.
As he will I will, and more I will not:
So God be pleaſed, ſay men what men will.

¶ That the mariage of Bishops, preestes, and other ministers of the church, is not only lawful by the word of God, but was also vsed in the primitiue Church and so forth before the Bishop of Rome by his wicked Decrees ordeined the Contrary.

IF MEN had ben so redy to redresse the filthy and vncleane lyfe of preestes (for the which they haue been noted moste worthely of the whole world) as they haue beene to staye them from the hollye state of matrymony (wherby the amendement of the same shuld haue ensued) neyther shoulde wyueles lyfe haue hadde so many procters as it had, neyther vnchaste lyuyng shoulde so muche haue raygned as it doeth: But they would haue ben as willing to set the pen to the boke to make the vnchaste and vycious

lyuers to repent and receaue the re-
medy of the holly state of matrimo-
ny, as some busy bodyes haue been
ready to procure statutes & lawes,
wherby the vnchaste sole life hath
beene wyth feare of the paynes of
death continued, and the chast ma-
ried lyfe in some state condemned.
The cloud which hath so long blin
ded the eyes of the lay sorte in thys
poynt, was the opinion of hollines
that they conceaued in preestes, for
that they maryed not as other men
dyd: and the cloud that blinded the
eyes of the priestes, was the gaine
that they gotte by their vnworthye
estimacion. So the one beyng de-
ceued by simplenes and ignorance,
and the other by couetousnesse and
vayne glory, haue by a mutuall cō-
sent continued this deuelyshe state
of vnchaste sole life, to the greate
hinderance of vertue, and auaunce
ment of vice, and so to the subuer-
sion of the kyngdome of Christ and

setting

settyng vp of the kingdome of antichriste. To the entent therefore that this cloud of ignorance might bee the soner taken awaye from the eyes of the ignoraunte, and that they myght know, that it is not the vnmaryed lyfe, whyche maketh the preest better in the sight of the lord, but the wourse, if he lyue burnyng in desyres, contrary to the order in scripture commaunded, I haue set forth this little treatise, trustynge hereby to please God, and to edifye his congregation: the encrease of whose kyngdome and heuenly glorye I only seeke, and to quiete the consciences of many, whiche be not yet fully instructed and resolued, in this point. And firste I will begin wyth this generall proposition of Paul to the Corinthiãs. For the auoiding of fornicatiõ (saith Paul) let euery mã haue his wyfe, & euery womã her husband. These two wordes, euery man, and euery woman, 1.Co.7

 beto=

betokeneth that this saiynge of S. Paul doth dispēce w̄ no mā noꝛ woman, that cannot otherwyse avoyd foꝛnication, but that he willeth all soꝛtes, both of men & women, whiche be endaungered by the reason of their flesshe to fall into foꝛnicatiō, to auoyde the same by the heauenly meane of mariage, which is a remedy apointed of God foꝛ that ende and purpose. This phꝛase of speakynge to call matrimonye a remedy, is not only vsed in ỹ Scriptures, but in the doctours also, who affirme wyth one consente that matrimonye oughte to be vsed in the Churche of God, not only foꝛ pꝛocreation and increase of the woꝛlde, but also foꝛ a remedy of incontinency. And therfoꝛe Paule nameth the doctryne, which would take awaye this remedy, a doctrine of the deuell: by the which woꝛdes it shuld appeaꝛe that Paule foꝛesawe no small myschefe, whiche shoulde ensue

1. Tim 4

sue to the Churche of God, by re-
straynynge the liberty of mariage,
or els woulde he neuer haue termid
it so heinously, callyng it a doctrine
of deuils. If this doctrine had ben
persuaded only to prestes, & not by
lawe commaunded, it had ben more
tollerable, but seyng it hath a com-
maundement, it is euident, that it
is the same doctryne whiche Paule
calleth a doctrine of deuels that for-
byddeth mariage. But what can all
the cõmaundementes of man, that
euer were made, preuayle agaynste
the ordinaunce of God, planted in
mans nature, in hys fyrste creation?
Bow a tree by arte with all the wis-
dom you can deuise, streinyng it, ỹ
it may not grow right, and yet wyl
it enioye the power of growing (all-
thoughe it be croked) as long as it
continueth in lyfe, obeyinge the or-
dinaunce and commaundement of
God, who at the begynnynge bade
it growe and multiplye: Euen so

the man, who hathe not the gyft to lyue without a wyfe, but is framed in his first creation to be one of thē, by whome the worlde shalbe increased, keepe hym downe with lawes & statutes as streitely as ye can, yet will he at one tyme or other, kycke against the lawe, and seke meanes to mainteine and exercise that nature, which God for the continuance of procreation, hath planted in his flesshe. The lawe and wytte of the lawe makers, cannot so restraine mannes will, that it wyll be vnwillyng to that thyng, wherevnto it is moste willyng, it will stryue against the lawe, make it neuer so stronge, other in mynde or in deede, as it appereth by the vnchaste lyfe of those, whyche haue been bounde by lawes, not hauynge the gyfte, with whose lyfe, wourse then lecherouse, I am ashamed to occupye my pen. Howe many thousandes haue their been, whyche haue stryuen ernestly

ly for a tyme to obaye the lawe of sole lyfe, contrary to theyr nature: And yet haue they in conclusion perceaued theyr owne weakenesse so greate, that they were fayne to geue ouer, and yeld to their nature, not withstandynge their former purpose, and the streight lawe of deathe by man made to the contrary: Neyther fastynge neyther watchynge, neyther any thynge suche lyke, is more able to staye theyr desyre (theyr lyfe and helthe beynge preserued) then minyshyng of moisture and earthe aboute the roote of a tree, (so ye kylle it not) is able to staye the same tree frome bryngynge forthe of leaues and blossomes in the sprynge tyme of the yeare: whereby it maye appere howe sore the lawe makers of sole lyfe, haue thus longe tyme stryuen agaynste the streame, purposynge to bynde the wynde,

whiche beynge indued with the spi-
ryte of God, is at lybertie, whan
their bandes haue no further force,
but vpon the bodye onlye and the
outwarde actions. Yf anye man
woulde obiecte vnto me, that ma-
riage can not stande with the order
of preſthod: I wyl aske him again,
whether mariage maie stand as wel
with the order of prieſthod now, as
it myght in the Apoſtles tyme or
not? If it be answered that it maye
not, then muſte you ſhewe a reaſon
why: which reaſon can not bee ſhe-
wed, except ye alledge the ordre of
prieſtynge deuiſed by the byſhop of
Rome, whiche varyeth in deede al-
moſt as farre from the preeſtes that
were of Chriſtes ordryng, as a dum
picture from the thynge or perſon
whome it doeth repreſente. And
therfore ought they to bee corrected
and redreſſed to theyr former ex-
aumple: ſo that it muſte needes be
confeſſed, that mariage may as wel

That mariage & prieſthod may ſtand together.

ſtande

stande with the order of preestehod now, as it myght haue done in the Apostels tyme: which thing beyng granted, if I can shewe by the scripture and doctoures that the same Apostels were maried, then may I saye, ẏ the obiection is false, for asmuch as mariage stode w̄ presthod in the Apostels. To proue then that the Apostels were maried, being by shoppes and prestes: Peters wiues mother (as the Gospell witnesseth) was healed by Christe of a feuer, by ẏ which wordes it is playn ẏ Peter had a wyfe which thinge Clemens Alexādrinus writing against thē ẏ reproued mariage, doth plainly approue, saiynge: An & Apostolos improbauit? Petrus etenim ac Philippus, & vxores habuerunt, et filias nuptum dederunt: Do thei reproue the Apostels? Peter and Phillyppe hadde wiues, and also children, which thei gaue to be maryed. And of the mariage of the same Peter, and also of other

Mat. 8.

Li. 3. ca. 30. Ecle. Hist.

other Apostles, thus writeth Ignatius, Saincte Johns disciple:

Non detraho autem cæteris beatis, qui nuptijs copulati fueruut, quorum nunc memini, optò enim Deo dignus ad vestigia eorum in regno ipsius inueniri, sicut Abraham et Isaac, et Iacob sicut Ioseph et Esaias et ceteri Prophetæ, sicut Petrus & Paulus, & reliqui Apostoli, qui nuptijs fuerunt sociati. Qui non libidinis causa, sed posteritatis sub rogande gratia coniuges habuerunt.

That is to saye: I discommend not other hollye men, whych were maried, of whome I haue nowe spoken, My desyre is, that I maye be founde acceptable to God in hys kyngedome at theyr foote steppes, as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and Esaye bee, and all the reste of the Prophetes: As Peter, and Paule, and the reste of the Apostles, who were coupled in maryage, and yet not maryed for the fulfyllynge of theyr oodely lustes,

but

but for the mayntenaunce of theyr posterytee and ofspryng. Whome shoulde we allowe for a wytnesse of the maryage of the Apostles, if ye wyll refuse Ignatius (who testifyed Chryste by his martyrdome and deathe, and was in the same worlde a disciple of Saincte John the Euangelyste.) If the prouerbe bee true whyche is vsed of Plautus the Comic. Plus valet oculatus testis vnus, quàm auriti decem: One eye witnesse is more woorthy to be esteemed, then tenne eare witnesses. We oughte to geue more creadyte to Ignatius, thenne to any other, whose knowlage is only grounded vpon a contrary reporte. Saincte Ambrose dooeth also confirme the same sentence, saiyng: Omnes Apostoli, excepto Iohane, vxores habuerunt, Al ỳ apostles, except John, had wyues. So ỳ I trust, I nede not to labour any more in prouynge this pointe (it beynge proued by so olde

In Ca. 12. prim. epist. ad Cor.

and

and autentike wryters) that to be a
prieſt and to haue a wyfe, be not re-
pugnaunte, but ſtande ſo well to-
gether, that the Apoſtels were By-
ſhoppes and preeſtes, and yet they
had wyues not withſtandyng. But
what nedeth me to wander ſo farre
in the doctoures for the proofe here
of: whan this thing may otherwiſe
be eaſly ſhewed by the ſcriptures it
ſelfe, firſte and formoſt ſaith Paule
1. Tim 3. both to Timothy and to Tite: A bi
Tit. 1. ſhop or prieſt, muſt be the huſbād of
one wife. Paul doth not ſay: It is y
nough for him if he hath had a wife,
but he ſaith in ỹ p̃ſent time: Si quis eſt
ſine crimine, vnius uxoris uir. & opor-
tet epiſcopū irreprehenſibilem eſſe. He
muſte eſſe, be, the huſbande of one
wyfe. Neither finde I greate fault
with the doctours which chaunge,
be, into hath byn. But ſuche Byſ-
ſhops and Preeſtes as neither bee
neither haue beene maryed, neither
wille marrye to this daye, muſte

fynd

find some other exposition, for this texte of S. Paule, or els can not I se how they can excuse them selues, but ỹ thei shalbe foũd gilty by this description and rule of a blameless Byshoppe. I remenbre that Theophilacte vpon this texte fyndeth a faulte with suche, as would haue a wyfe, in this place, to sygnyfy one Churche or one benefice: but they which so wrieth ỹ scripture, oughte rather merily to be laughed at, then to be with studie confuted, for experience doth declare, that thei would rather (vxor) a wife, in this place shoulde signifie twenty other mens wyues, thẽ one of their owne. They handle the scriptures, as S. Hierome did against Iouinian: That is to saye, make it soũd as it is writhed, and not as it was wrytten. The wordes of them selues be so plain, that it can not be denied, but that Paule ment that it was not only a thing of sufferaunce, but veray

Theoph vpon. 1. Tim. 3.

conue-

conuenient, or rather requisite for a byshop or a prieste to haue a wyfe. ¶ This haue I proued by the woorde of God, by the doctours, and by the example of the Apostles, that prest-hoode in his most holynesse and perfection, maie well bee ioyned with the holy state of matrimony. If any man would pretende, that mariage shuld hinder him from ỹ seruyng of God, let hym reade Chrisostome in Genesim. And in an other place also, in a sermon that he made against the Iewes, the Gentyles, and the heretykes, vpon the mariage made in Cana, where he hath these woordes: Nec excuses te propter nuptias, Dominus tuus nuptijs interfuit, & nuptias honestauit, & dicis, nuptias obstaculum esse ad pietatem? Nullum enim ad pietatem est obstaculum. Vis cognoscere quia nihil nocet habere vxorem & liberos? Moses, nonne vxorem habuit & liberos? Helias, nonne virgo erat? Nonne Moses Manna de celo deduxit?

Mariage is no hynderance to a godly lyfe. Chrisost. ho. 21. in gene.

duxit? Nonne Elias ignem de cœlo deduxit? An nocuit huic virginitas? an impedimento fuerunt huic vxor & liberi? Vidisti Heliam aurigam in aëre: Vidisti Mosen in mare viatorem: vide et Petrum ecclesiæ columnam, quia & ipse vxorem habuit. &c. Excuse not thy selfe, because of mariage (saith Chrisostom) thy Lord was at a mariage, and commended it with his presence: And saiest thou, that mariage is a hynderaunce to a godly lyfe? It is no hynderaunce to a godly lyfe. Wilt thou know that it hurteth nothyng to haue a wife & children? Had not Moyses a wyfe and childrē? Was not Helias a virgin? Dyd not Moyses bryng Manna from heuen? Dyd not Helias bryng fyre from heauen? Dyd virginitee hynder the one? Or dyd maryage hynder thother? Thou seest Helias ridyng in a carte in the ayre: Thou seest Moses passyng thorough the myddes of the sea: Beholde Pe-

ter also, a Piller of the Church, had a wyfe. &c. In case that ye thynke that the exāples of Moses, Helias and Peter, be not enough, I wyl be so bolde (to bring example of Chrysostome) to adde vnto theym thre: hollye Abraham, and all the rest of Patriarkes and Prophetes of the olde testament: All the Apostles of Christ in the new testament, Philip the euāgelist, who had many doughters: Cheremon, a bishop in Egipt, of a cittie called Nilopolis: Philias also, whiche was bothe byshop and Marter, and Policrates, a Byshop of the Ephesians, which sayd: Seuen of my fore fathers by ordre, wer Byshoppes of this See, and I am the eyght: Spiridion, and a great numbre of holly men mo, whiche all were maried & highly in the fauour of God. Mariage was no more hinderance to Abraham and the rest of the Patriarches, touching the trew seruice of God, and beyng in the fauour

Actu. 21.

These shall ye haue in Eccl. si. histo of Euseb.

uour of god, then it was to Moses. Mariage was no hinderance to all the rest of the Apostles, neither is it this day to any other godly man: so that by the meanes thereof, they bee not caste oute of the fauoure of God, more then was sayncte Peter. And saincte Jhon Chrysostom vpon the epistle to Tite, sayeth: Adeo preciosa res est matrimonium, ut possit quis cum eo ad sanctum Episcopatus solium subuehi, So precious a thynge is Matrimonye (sayeth he) that a manne maye ascende with it to the holly seat of a byshop. Let then this vayne quarreli, that mariage shoulde hynder enny man from the seruice of God, be no more alledged, as though there were a great matter in it, when it is sufficiently shewed, that there is none in deede.

But this geare, they thynke, wyll soone bee aunswered, grauntynge that the Apostles and other

holly bishops and prieſtes had wy-
ues as I ſay: Mary, than will they
ſay agayn, that neither the apoſtles
neyther the reſte of the forenamed
Eccleſiaſticall perſons had any ma
trimoniall vſe of their wyfes, after
the tyme of their election to their mi
niſtery, but did put them away, and
vtterly forſooke the companye of
theim, after that tyme. Well, yet
than graunt they, that the apoſtles
and other holy byſhoppes and prie-
ſtes had wiues, euen in the tyme of
their apoſtleſhyp and miniſterye,
whyche thyng I take at their han-
des as wonne good grounde. For
by that, haue al they granted (whi-
che flee to this obiection) that a ma-
ried man maie be a prieſte, his wyfe
being aliue. After this victory then
let vs thus procede: The apoſtles
(they ſaie) put awaye their wyues,
after the tyme they were called to
the preachynge of the Goſpell. If
I ſhould aſke ye, howe you proue

that

that, shoulde not the beste reason or auctoritee that ye coulde bryng for your purpose bee blynde reason or coniecture? Well, answer what ye shal thynk good, whã I haue made aunswere to your former obiection. When ye speake of puttyng away of wyues, it is conuenient, that ye call to remembrance the lawfull causes why a man may put awaye his wyfe, by goddis woorde: And in serchyng, ye shall fynde there, that a man can not put awaye his wyfe for any other cause, but for adultery onely. Than is the preachynge of the Gospell no cause, why a man shoulde put away his wyfe. Muche lesse for the Apostles of Christe, whose lyfe was a rule to all the reste of the Christen congregation. I trust you bee not so shameleſſe, that ye wyll chalenge the Apostles wyues to bee euyll women, for the mayntenance of your fond reason. And yet yf you woulde so doo, it

Mat 5. & 19.

maye be gathered by the Scripture that they were godlye and obedient women to their husbandes to your confusion. It is to be thought, that suche as Christe appoynted to rule the whole Congregacion, were hable to rule their wyues, their chyldren and family, or elles should not Christ haue obserued the same rule in chusyng of his apostles, as Paule prescribed to Timothye, in chusynge a Bysshoppe. If they were obedient wyues to their husbandes (as by that scripture it may bee gathered that they were) you must nedes graunt, that the Apostles dyd not put away their wyues, for if they hadde, they shoulde haue offended agaynste Goddes woorde, who chargeth man, not to put awaye his wyfe for any cause, but for adultery only.

1. Tim. 3.

Thus then I conclude: Goddes woorde sayeth, that no man maye put awaye his wyfe excepte for adultery

ultery, ergo, they dyd not put them away. Yea, and further it maye be thus proued by scripture, that they had Matrimoniall companye with theire wyues in thys wyse. The worde of God was the onely rule of the Apostles lyfe: So that what soeuer Goddes woorde commaunded them, so they dyd: But Gods woorde commaunded them, saiynge: Vir uxori debitum reddat, similiter et uxor uiro. Let the man render the dutye of a husbande to his wyfe, and the woman to her husbande. 1.Cor.7

Ergo, the Apostles beyng ruled by the sayde scripture, & obeiyng gods woorde in this poynte, had matrimonial company with their wiues, and did accordyngly as scripture willeth them. For a proofe wherof, the scripture doth testify that the apostles & the brothers of the Lord & Cephas, caried their wiues about wt thē, to what purpose I pray you: if it were not for the auoidynge of that in-

conuenience, agaynste the whyche matrimonie is prouyded by god for remedye. If a wyfe be a trouble to theim that be prieſtes (as ſome do alledge it) why lefte they not theyr wiues at one place remaynyng, and diſcharged theim ſelues of ſo cloggyng a cariage: as by the ſcripture it ſhoulde ſeeme that Paule dyd. I doubt not, but that they wold haue ſo doone, yf the infirmitee of the fleſhe had not diſſuaded them to the contrary. Retourne not to your former fantaſy, ſayeng as ye bee wont, that ye can not be anſwered, for if ye can defende without bluſhyng, that ſcripture rightly alleged, is not ſufficient to confound your coniecture whyche is directly agaynſt it, than is your face ſo blyndeleſſe, that it can not bluſſhe.

A prieſt may not put awei his wife vnder p̄tence of holines.

And becauſe no man ſhould pretende a religious holyneſſe, by the meanes whereof he myghte ſhyfte awaye his wyfe, the apoſtles decreed

creed, as it appeereth in their Canons, that Episcopus aut presbyter vxorem propriam, nequaquã sub obtentu religionis abiiciat, A bysshop or a prieste in no wyse maie put awaie his wife, vnder the pretence of holynesse, and colour of religion: by the whiche Canon it maie appeere, that the apostles dyd not put away their wyues. And yet came there a sorte of heritikes, named Eustachiani, shortly after the apostles tyme, who sayde, that prestes that were maried shuld not be set by, and dissuaded the people from receauyng the Sacramentes at suche prestes handes: For the condemnation of whiche heretikes in the old councel of Gangris, whych was about the same tyme, that Nicene coũsel was, This decree was made: Si quis discernit presbyterum coniugatũ, tanquã occasione nuptiarum, quod offerre non debeat, & ab eius oblatione ideo abstinet, amathema sit: If any iudge a ma-

Apostolorũ Can. 5.

The coũsayle of Gãgris

ried prieste, as thoughe he shoulde not minister, because he is married, and so for that cause withdraweth hym selfe frome suche a priestes ministration, let hym be accursed. This godly counsell of suche antiquitee, compelled not the priestes of these dayes to putte awaye their wyues, neyther condempned them frome their company, but allowed and commaunded theym vnder the payne of accursynge, to kepe styll their wyues, and condemned the Eustachians for heritikes, who vnder the pretence of holynesse were offended with the mariage of priestes, and held the contrary opinion to the counsell. And there is a place cited out of S. Gregory in the Decrees, whiche dothe plainly declare, that it is a lawe of man, & directly agaynst the law of God, that any man should put away his wyfe vnder such a pretence: These be the wordes: Sunt qui dicunt, religionis

Dist. 27. q. 2. Sunt qui dicūt

gratia

gratia coniugia debere dissolui, verũ scien-
dum est, quod si hoc lex humana con-
cessit, lex tamen diuina prohibuit, per
se enim veritas dicit: Quos deus con- Math. 19.
iunxit, homo ne separet. Qui etiam ait: Ibidem.
Non licet dimittere vxorem, excepta
causa fornicationis. Quis ergo huius la-
tori legis contradicat? scimus quia scri-
ptum est: Erunt duo in carne vna. Gen. 2.

That is to say: Somme there bee, whiche holde opinion, that marri-age ought to be broken for relygi-ous sake, but it muste bee knowen, that all thoughe the lawe of man hath so graunted it, yet the lawe of God hath forbydden it. For the truthe it selfe sayd: Let not manne Math 19
separate theim, whome God hath coupled. And it also sayeth: It is not laufull for a man to put awaye his wyfe, excepte for fornication. Who than maye gayne saye this lawmaker? For we knowe that it is written: They shall bee two in Gen. 2.
one flesshe. Marke these woordes

I praie you, and ye shall perceaue that they neede no interpretation nor wresting, for the proofe of this purpose. What wolde you haue more sayde, the thing beyng proued by the scripture, by ỹ Canõs of ỹ Apostels, & by the old ancient coũ sayles and doctours: me thinketh ye shuld change your iudgements, and say another while, as it is largely proued, that the Apostels dyd not put away their wyues, but cõpanyed wyth them, after the tyme that they were called to the preaching of the Gospell, without pretendyng holines of religion.

Priests to put awaye their wiues was the inuẽtion of the Byshope of Rome.

But then will ye fall on meruailing, how it came first to passe, that priestes dyd put away their wyues, they hauyng no warrant so to do by gods worde, neither yet exaumple of the Apostels of Christe, and other holye fathers in the Primitiue Churche: From this meruaylynge I truste easelye to delyuer

you

you, if ye wyll take paynes to reade on a littell. Howe shuld Antichrist haue been knowen, if the prophecyes of him shulde not haue been fulfilled: And one of the chiefe markes, wherby Daniel appointed out Antichriste is, that he shoulde forbyd maryage: whose prophecy must bee fulfylled. And Paule likewyse prophecyed, that suche doctoures shulde come in the latter days, whiche should confirme that dyuelishe doctrine of Antichriste, forbiddyng men to marye. This doctrine was firste founde out by the diuell, for the maintenaunce of whoredome and all filthye kind of liuing: And it was broughte to passe by the deuelles highe preest, Antichrist, the byshop of Rome, whose power by vsurpation extendeth thoroughout the moste part of Christendom, published and stablysshed this dyuelyshe doctrine against the mariage of preestes, contrary bothe to the 1. Tim. 4.

doc-

doctrine of Christe (for the whyche cause, it may wel bee called the doctrine of Antichrist) and contrary to the exãple of thapostles, as ye haue hearde. And for a proofe, that Antichrist byshop of Rome was the first setter abrode of this diuelyshe doctrine, I wyll cite vnto you a playn

6 Synod. distin. 31. cap. Quũ in Roma.

place ex sexto synodo. Quum in Romani ordine canonis cognouimus esse traditum, eos qui ordinati sunt diaconi vel presbyteri, confiteri ꝙ non iam suis copulentur vxoribus, antiquum sequentes canonem apostolicę diligentię, & constitutionis sacrorum virorum, legales nuptias amodo valere volumus, nullo modo cum vxoribus suis eorum concubia dissoluentes aut priuantes eos familiaritate ad inuicem in tempore oportuno: Quicunque ergo diligens inuentus fuerit in subdiaconali ordinatione aut diaconali aut sacerdotali, hij nullo modo prohibeantur ad talem ascendere gradum pro vxoris suæ cohabitatione, Nec etiam tempore ordinatio-

nationis ſuæ profiteri caſtitantẽ cogantur, quod abſtinere debeat à legalis vxoris familiaritate. Si quis igitur præſumpſerit, contra apoſtolicos canones, aliquos preſbyterorum & diaconorum priuare à contactu & communione legalis vxoris ſuæ, deponatur. Similiter & preſbyter aut diaconus, qui religionis cauſa vxorẽ ſuam expellit, excõmunicetur: ſi vero in hoc permanſerit, deponatur. &c. The englyſche wherof is this) For as muche as we knowe, that it is in the Canons of Rome, that ſuche as be appointed to take the order of Deacon or prieſte, confeſſe that they haue not matrymonyall companye of theyr wyues: Wee, followynge the olde Canone and rule of the apoſtelles dylygence, and the Conſtitutions of holly menne, wylle, that frome henſeforthe, lawfull matriage be effectualle, myndynge in no wyſe to lowſe the mutualle copulacyon

of

of them with their wyues, or els stayyng them frō their familiaritee together in tyme conuenient. Who soeuer therfore be found worthy in the order of subdeacon, deacon, or preeste, let him in no wise be kepte backe or forbydden to ascende vnto such a degree for that he hath his wyfe dwellynge with hym, neither let him be compelled to profesſe chastitye, whan they take orders, wherby he should forsake his lawful wiues company. Therfore if any man presume contrary to the Canons of the Apostles, to take away the mutual embrasinges and companyng with their laufull wyues from any preest, or deacon, let hym be disgraged: Likewyse that preest whiche putteth away his wife for religions sake, let him be excommunicate, and yf he so contynue, disgrade hym. Thus farre haue ye herd the wordes of the synode, by the which it is plaine, that the Canons of the Romyshe

mylhe sorte, and the Canons of the Apostles be contrari. The Apostles taught one thyng: The byshop of Rome brought in another. Nowe iudge you whether is beste for vs which professe Christ, to follow the Apostles of Christ, or the Romyshe Antichrist? The law of God, which wylleth byshopes and preestes to mary: or the doctrine of the deuyll, as Paule calleth it, whiche forbydeth theym maryage. It is an extreme wickednes abhorred of God, to stablyshe & defende a doctrine of deuils, cõtrary to the word of God, contrary to the example of the apostles, contrarye to the ordre of the Primitiue Churche, to the subuersiõ of chastitie, to the maintenãce of hoordom, & other fleshly beastlines: but whosoeuer forbyddeth mariage to theim that hathe not the gyfte of sole life, stablisheth a doctrine of deuils, with al the inconueniences before rehersed. Ergo, thei that forbid

riage to them whiche hathe not the gift of sole life, cõmaũd an extreme wyckednesse abhorred of God.

For a further proofe of this my purpose, I haue thought good here to recite certayne practises of the bysshop of Rome, which he vsed to bring this matter to passe. It were to tedious, to rehearse all the names of those Antichristian byshopes, that were the patchers & proppers vp of this Decree. Yet one or two of them can I not well passe ouer, but especially Gregorye the .vii. otherwyse named Hildebrande, whose life, whosoeuer hath read, may perceiue that he was one of the chiefe authors of the wyueles lyfe of the clergye.

Reade thorowghout the Cronicles, and I thynke you shal fynde few or none more vicious, more ambicious more cruel, more lecherous: Ye shal be forced to say, that Hildebrãd was euen a meete serpent to spit out such a poison at the cõmaũdment of Antichrist

tichrist, amonge the people of God. Thistoriographers doth abūdātly testify, what tumultes & rustlynges he caused at Magūce & Cōstance, & many other places in Fraunce and Germanye, for the establishment of this most abhominable law against the mariage of preestes.

And that ye may be the better acquainted with his practises, both in these & all other christian Realmes, ye shal vnderstand, that amōgest other letters sent to other parties, he addressed also hys letters to Otto byshop of Cōstance, cōmaūdyng, ỹ he shuld forbyd ỹ mariage through out his diocese, of suche preestes as were not yet maried, & that he shuld breke & loose the matrimonial knot betwene them, that were alredy maried: But Otto perceauing right wel thūgodly purpose of Hildeb. neither would diuorse those preestes which wer maried, nother deny ỹ liberti of mariage to such preestes as wer yet

vnmaryed. The byshope of Rome therfore cursed him, and discharged his subiectes of their dutyes and obedience towardes hym, and appoynted Otto a daye, to appeare before him at Rome in a counsell appoynted. In that coũsel Hildebzãd with thother bishops of Itali amõgest other thigs, established stoutly a law, that frõ thencefozth, pzeestes should not mary. And that such as had maried, shuld other fozthw put away their wyues, oz els be clearely expelled from all ecclesiasticall function. And none to be admitted into the ozdze of pzeesthode, vnlesse he fyzst were swozne, neuer to mary.

This Decree of the sole life of pzeestes (when the counsell was dissolued) was publyshed throughe oute Italy. And the byshops euery wher there, were cõmanded bothe to obey and execute it. And lykewyse were the byshops of Fraunce fozced to obey the determinacion of the same

Decree

Decree, made by that same counsel of Rome: But the clergy of Fraūce withstode boldly Hildebrandes decree, and cried with one assent, affirmyng, that counsell to be directly a gaynst Goddes holye wooꝛde. And that the byshop of Rome tooke that thyng awaye from pꝛeestes, whiche both God and nature had giuen vn to them: and that the said byshop of Rome was an heretique, & thauctoꝛ of a wycked doctrine, by the suggestion not of the holy gost, but of the deuyll himselfe: and moꝛeouer that his decree was contrary to this saiyng of Chꝛist: All receaue not this wooꝛde: and contrarye also to this holsome doctrine of Saynt Paule: As touchyng virginitie I haue no cōmaundement of the Loꝛde: And he that can not absteyn, let him mary: And contrarye also bothe to the Canons of the Apostles, and of Nicene counsell. They founde faulte with this Hildebrāde foꝛ ẏ he wolde

Math. 19.

1. Cor 7.

haue theim contrary to the ozder of nature, lyue lyke Angels without the company of women, and that he hadde also by this Decree opened a windowe to whoozedome and al vnclennesse. Insomuche that they answered with one voice, that thei had rather lose their benefices, then forsake (agaynste the woozde of the Lozde) theire wyues. And (sayde they) if maryed pzeestes be an euyl syght to the bishop of Romes eyes, then let hym call Angelles downe from heauen to be ministers in the Churche. But the byshop of Rome was nothynge stirred with all these godly reasons & authozities of scripture, neither yet with the Decree of the holly Nicene counsell, but moued continuallye the myndes of the byshops, with swarmes of imbassadours, & sendyng of letters thycke and thzefolde, accusynge theym foz their slackenesse & negligence, and also thzetnyng them with the plage of his

of his curse, vnlesse they compelled their preestes to obeye his Decree. So that a great numbre of bishops beyng forced by this tirannye of the byshop of Rome, applyed them selues to take away the lawfull law of matrimony frome their preestes. But tharchebishop of Magũce perceauing that it woulde be a weghty and no easye thynge to compasse, to take Mariage cleane awaye frome the preestes of his Diocesse: fyrste he admonyshed theym frendlye of this Romysh Decree, geuyng them halfe a yeares respite, for to consult vpon the thynge, and aduertisyng them earnestely to obey the byshop of Rome and hym. And that they woulde of theim selues willynglye do that thyng, whiche they shoulde in conclusyon, wyll they nyll they, be constrayned to dooe: otherwyse he shuld be forced to attempte some thing more greuous agaynst them.

The halfe yeare beeynge expy-

red, Tharchebyshop called a conuocation at Ertfort, where he commanded them, accordyng to the bishop of Romes decree, either vtterly to forsake and forswere mariage, or elles to leaue of their ecclesiastical ministerie: but the clergie defended them selues against Hildebrandes Decree, with scriptures, with reasons, with saiynges of counsels, with therãples of their forefathers, & with a numbre of vnanswerable argumentes, wherby they proued, that the sayd Decree was nothyng to be estemed, but to be worthyly of all men reiected. And whan tharche bishop replied, saiyng, that he was compelled of the bishop of Rome, & that he could do no lesse but accomplishe and kepe his lawes. The clergy perceauyng that there coulde be no meanes made to compasse theyr bishop, neither by disputation, neither yet by intreaty, they withdrew them selues a litell from the coũsell,

as

as purposyng to consulte vpon the matter: some thought not good to returne into the counsell, and some other thought it was good to returne, and pluck tharchebishop out of his chaire by the eares, handling hym as he had deserued, that there might a notable testimony remayn to their posterite of his worthy deth on that sorte, so that all his successours might take ensample by hym to beware how they toke away such priuileges and libertees from the clergi. Tharchebishops spies, made reporte vnto hym of theyr intente, that went out. Then sent the archebyshope somme of his frendes to them that were without, for to counsell them to conceaue a good opinion of their bishop, and to wyl them quietly to retourne agayn into the counsell. They were contented and retourned. Than the archebyshop made promise, that he would do the best he coulde to change the byshop

of Romes mynde, wyllyng them in the meane season to returne to their cures. The next yere folowyng, the byshop of Maguncе at the cõmandement of the byshop named Curiensis (whõ the bishop of Rome had sent in ambassage vnto hym, bothe with his letters and cõmandement) called a counsayle at Maguncе. In this counsayle he commaunded the clergie vnder the peyne of cursyng, that they wolde immediatly in that present Synode, either vtterly forsake their wyues, or els their ministery for euer. The Clergie pleadid theyr owne cause boldely: and whan they perceyued that their answere coulde not be herde, but that they should be compelled by the tyrannie of the byshop of Rome, to obeye, there was a sodayn tumulte, wherein the ruffelynge was so violente, and with suche a force, that bothe the byshop of Romes ambassadour and the archebyshope were

put

putte in ieopardie of their lyues. The counsayl brake vp. The archebyshop perceyuynge and fearynge the daunger of the matter, woulde medle no more with the reasonyng therin, but committed all togither to the byshop of Rome, therein to doo what he shoulde thynke good. But he would here neither Scripture, neyther reason, neyther any auncient wryter sence the apostles tyme. His eares were stopped agaynste all reasons, whyche were contrarye to his opinyon: he heaped vp his thunderboltes of cursynges and excommunications vpon all theym that woulde not obeye this sayenge of his: we wyll, charge, and straytely commaunde you. He wente foorthe on lyke hym selfe, withoute all feare of God, withoute all reuerence to the holly Scriptures, as a horne woode beaste, for the maynteynaunce of his dyuelyshe Decree, pzeten-

pretendyng alwaies a zeale to chastitee, that he myght the safelyer lyue without suspicion in his accustomed lecherous life, whereof the histories doth plentuously intreate, and thus by violence and tyrannie, he compassed his purpose.

The lyke practyse to this that was vsed in Italye Fraunce and Germanye, hath been vsed also in Englande by the bysshops at sundrye tymes, but namely in kynge Edgars dayes, thorough the suggestion of the bysshoppes, Dunston, Ethelwald, and Oswalde, thre monkes, by whose procurement to John the .xiii. of that name, bishop of Rome. The prestes, who were named secular canons, were banysshed out of their colleges of Wynchester and Worcetter, and sundry other places of the realme, bycause they hadde wyues, and monkes were placed in theyr roumes.

The chiefe cause that was layde to

their

theyr charge wherfore to put them oute of their lyuynges was, that they were maried. But why I pray you were the monkes nowe of late dayes agayne displaced? If Matrimonie myght be called a faulte (as God forbydde that any christen tongue shoulde abuse it selfe in so speakynge) yet had it been but one fault. Nowe for that one faulte (as they call it) what a numbre of fautes I praye you, were there founde in the abbaies at the kynges maiesties visitation? Dyd not the confessions of theim selues, in maner without examination, wytnes those abbays to be the store houses of al vicious lyfe and abhomination? Was not there couched togither in one dunghyll, superstition, ydolatrie, pryde, malice, ydelnesse, ignorance, abhorryng of maryage, and yet a satisfyeng of their stynkynge lustes of theyr bodyes other ways? and vnder the pretence of obedyence

ence to theyr Abbotte or pryoure, dysobedyence to God, and theyr prynce, &c. These were the holly ones, whome Dunstone placed in steede of the Preestes, whyche lyued in Godlye marryage. These were the chaste and vertuous lyuers, agaynste whose lyfe it was not lawfulle to speake. But yee maye see by theyr ouerthrowe, how well God was pleased with theyr woorkes. Ye may see how woorthily God hath caste downe theyr begun buylded Babylon, and hathe scattred those b!yndlynges to their vtter confusion, and his moste heauenly glory. Thei entred theyr houses as though God hadde geuen theim possession, but thankes bee geuen to God, who hath sent Christ with his whyppe, challengynge theym for pappystes and lyars, and declarynge to all the whole worlde that they haue made his howse a

Sodo-

Sodomyticall denne of beastelye blynde wretches and steale swat theeues. The selfe same thynge was also practysed by Anselme archebyshoppe of Caunterburye, in Henrye the fyrste his dayes, the seconde yeare of his Reygne, in a Counsaylie holden at London, where he forbadde the preestes of Englande to haue wyues. It was at that tyme a straunge mattter vnto theym: For as Huntingdonensis doeth wryte, they were neuer forbydden vntyll that day. And for a confyrmacion of Anselmes facte, there was sente into Englande, frome the Byshope of Rome one Joannes Cremenses, a Cardynalle, who helde a Counsaylie at London, where he alledged many reasones for the restraynte and prohybytyon of Preestes marriages, and amongest other allegacions, he sayde, that it Libro.7.

was

was an exceadynge great abhomi-nacion, for a preest to aryse frome a whores side (for so he called preestes lawfull wyues) and immediatly to goe make gods body. Yet it came to passe that although he hadde the same day sayde masse (which he cal-led the makynge of Gods body) he was taken with a whore the same nyght. From whence came this fe-low I pray you? came he not frome Rome? was he not a Cardinal? was he not sent frome the capitayne ge-nerall of Antichristes kyngdome the bysshoppe of Rome him selfe? What neede we then to doubt from whence this lawe of wyueles lyfe came fyrst, and who were the stabli-shers therof?

Some cry, the Church the Church: was not this Cardinall trowe you a meete membre of the Churche, to make a lawe for the rulynge of the Churche? Thus hathe the deuyll vnder the name of preeste, byshop,

Cardi-

Cardinall, Pope, and Churche, deceaued all the worlde. Surely I am perswaded that it was doone by the hyghe prouidence of God, that this Cardinall shoulde be so taken in suche a trappe, at that tyme especially, bicause he would haue it notified to all the whole worlde, that the wyueless lyfe of preestes, which Antichrist studied to bryng to passe, was altogither the deuils doctrine, and contrarye to the mynde of the holy ghoste. Ye maye se, that this Church of Rome is the well spring of all the poyson that hath infected thuniuersal church of Christēdome.

All the Greke Churche hath ben, from the Apostles tyme to this day, cleare from this heresy, in that they neuer alowed ỹ doctrine of sole life, but haue continued cōtrarye, in the doctryne of the Apostles, as the byshop of Rome confesseth in hys owne Decrees. Aliter se orientalium habet traditio ecclesiarum, aliter huius dist.31.c.d. Aliter.

S. Ro. eccleſię: nã eaꝝ ſacerdotes, Diaconi, aut ſubdiaconi, matrimonio copulãtur: Iſtiꝰ autẽ eccl'ię, uel occidẽtaliũ, nullꝰ ſacerdotũ, à ſubdiacono uſq; ad epm̃, licẽtiã habet cõiugiũ ſortiẽdi. The churches of the Eaſt, (ſaith the biſhop of Rome) haue one tradicion & ordre, & this holly church of Rome another: for the preſtes, deacõs, & ſubdeacõs of the Greke church, doth mary: but no preeſt of the churche of Rome, or of ỹ weſt churches, frõ ſubdeacõ to ỹ degree of a biſhop, hath licẽſe to mary. By this text may ye ſee, not only who thei be which hath begun & continued the doctrine of the Apoſt. in this poynt, but alſo who they bee, which haue brought in, the cõtrary doctrine. Nowe then is my purpoſe proued, & your merueilyng (howe it came firſt to paſſe that preeſtes dyd put away their wyues) anſwered, in ỹ it is ſhewed, that it is by doctrine of the deuyl, & firſt publiſhed by the Romiſh byſhoppe, otherwyſe called Antichriſt, acordig to the prophecies

of Paul & Daniel. Some sophistes wold yet paduenture frame further cauellatiõ, grãting ỹ prests may mary before they be prestes, but it must not (wil thei say) be grãted, that thei mai mary after thei be once ẽtred into ỹ holly ordre of presthod. But my former reson wel waid, wil make a redy way for an answer to this obiectiõ. For if it be grãted, ỹ thapostles & other holy mẽ lai w̃ their wiues after thei wer called & chosẽ to their ministeri (as I haue before proued ỹ thei did) cõpare mariage of a wife & lieg w̃ a wife togither, & when it shal apere vnto you, ỹ mariage of a wife, is as smal an offẽce as liyng w̃ a wife, ye will be as redy to graunt the one, as ye wer to graunt the other. All the world must graũt, ỹ matrimony is not denied to prestes for ỹ own sake, bicause of it selfe it is an holy thyng ordeined of God: but bicause as the ptend of the mutual cõpany betwen ỹ man & the womã, which followeth

A preest may marye after that he hath receyued thordre of presthode.

matrimony, & is iudged of the vnlearned, an vngodly thynge. Nowe then the mutuall companye of the preest & his wyfe, beyng founde lawfull amongest suche as be all redye entred into the order of preesthode, ye must nedes graũt, that to marry is as lawfull, which is of it selfe no euyll thing but good, not vngodly but lawful & honorable in al states. How say ye to ỹ very words of God him selfe in the .xxi. chap. of Leuit.

Leuit.21. where he saide: Sacerdos uiduam, prophanam, repudiatam, & meretricem nõ ducet in uxorem, sed uirginem. The preest shall mary no wydow, no heathen woman, no deuorsed woman, nor no cõmen women, but a virgin of his owne nacion. Preestes be not so straitly tyed with lawes, nowe in the tyme of the lyght of the gospell, as they were in the shadowe of Moses: And yet ye see, that euen in the myddes of the Mosaicall cõmaundementes, a preeste might marrye after

after he was a preest: and if his wife died, he might by the same law marry the widow of an other preest, whiche thinge Innocencius the .i. had in remembraunce in his Decree, saiynge: Mulierem uiduam clericus non ducat uxorem: quia scriptum est: Sacerdos uxorem uirginem accipiat, non uiduam, non reiectam. &c. Ye may see that in the time of Innocencius the first, a preest myght marry after he was preest. And Leo the first, entreatyng of the same matter, sayed: Si in ueteri testamento hec sacerdotalium coniugiũ forma, seruata est, quanto magis sub reuelata iam gratia constituti, apostolicis debemus inseruire preceptis? If this mãner of prestes mariages was obserued in the olde testament, how muche more ought we to obeye the Apostolicall cõmaundementes, beyng now in the tyme of grace? Another place there is in the decrees which proueth this poynte, wherof these bee the wordes: Diaconus qui-

In Decretis Innocentij ca. 4. ad Victuriũ Rothomagen

Epist. 85.

Distin. 28 Diaconi. ex synodo Ancyriatana. ca. 308.

cumq; cum ordinantur, si in ipsa ordinatione protestati sint, dicentes se uelle habere uxores, nec posse se continere, si postea ad nuptias peruenerit, maneant in ministerio: propterea q; his Eps licentiam dederit. That is to say: What soeuer Deacons they be, that make protestacion in takyng of their Ordres, that thei wyl haue wyues, and that thei can not refrayne: In case they marry afterwarde, yet shal thei remayne in their ministery, bicause the Byshop hath so licenced theym.

In these woordes may ye learne, that some marryed, or at the leaste, that it was not agaynste the lawes of God, but that they myght marry after the receiuyng of their ordres, and a prouiso also, that they should not be disgraded for so doing. If ye allege, that Ordo impedit matrimoniũ contractum, & dirimit contrahendum, Orders let the contracting of matrimony, and breake matrimony alreadye contracted, I wyll set the

byshop

Bishope of Rome to answere you with his Decrees, who sayeth: Copula sacerdotalis, nec legali nec euāgelica, nec apostolica authoritate, phibetur, ecclesiastica tantum lege interdicitur. Distin. 26 que. 2. Sors. Causa 26. q. 2.

The mariage of preestes is not forbydden, neither by the law of God, neither by the law of the gospel, nether yet by the Apostles, but by the Ecclesiasticall law it is vtterly forbydden: Unto the which saiyng, all the learned men both in the lawe, & in the scole learnyng, as Panormitane, Thomas, Albert, Duns, Bonauenture & other, doth agree: Insomuch that Panormitanus ỹ gret learned lawyer sayeth: Melius fore, & pro bono ac salute animarū salubrius, si & uniuscuiusq; uolūtati reliqueretur, ita ut non ualentes aut nō uolentes continere, possint contrahere. Quia experientia docente, comperimus contrariū effectū sequi ex illa lege, cū hodie plericq; nō uiuāt spūalit, nec sint mūdi, sed maculētur illicito coitu, cū ipsorū grauissimo

to, vbi cum propria vxore esset castitas, That is: It were better and wholsomer for the saluation of soules, that this thynge were lefte to euery mans wyll, so that suche as eyther could not or wold not abstein, might marry: for we perceaue now by experience, that there foloweth a contrary effect of the lawe of sole lyfe: forasmuche as many nowe a daies lyue not spiritually, neyther bee cleane, but defyled with vsyng vnlauful commixtions, to the hetnous offence of God, where as if it were with theyr owne wyues, it were chastitee. In these woordes ye may see the great clerke Panormitan lamēt this lawe of wiueleſſe lyfe, & fynde great faute therwith. Which thyng he wold neuer haue don, if that law had com from God. But frō whens this lawe came fyrst, I haue declared largely before, that it was deuised by the dyuel, and publyshed and also stablyshed in all chrysten realmes

mes where it was receaued, by the vicars of Antichriſt. Then maye I graunt you, that Orders let the contractyng of matrimony, and breake the matrimony all redy contracted, not by the lawe of God, but by the lawe of the byſhop of Rome, whoſe lawe here hath the name of the eccleſiaſticall lawe, and ſo my former reaſons ſtand in their full ſtrengthe and force. Faber Stapulenſis doth expreſſe to the eye this diuelyſh law with a very proper ſimilitude, wher by the diuels craft is liuely diſcifurid and opened to all mens ſighte. Thus he ſaith: Apoſtolicum nuptiarum ritum retinuerũt Græci, neq; mutare voluerunt. Agamiam acceptauerunt aliæ eccleſiæ, vnde plurimi per deteriorem incontinentiam lapſi, in pedicas inciderunt diaboli: Araneos vides veneno turgentes, tam ſubtilia retia texere, quę oculos fallere poſſit: quicquid incidit, mortifero morſu necant: & primum quod aggrediuntur caput eſt, ſen

In epiſt. i. ad Tim. 3.

ſus auferentes. Hæ dæmonis & laqueorum eius mira arte & ſubtilitate nobis prętenſorum, & venenatorum morſuum, quædam ſunt adumbrationes, qui etiam retia plærunq; nectit, in his quæ clariora & ſanctiora videntur. The Grecians (ſaythe he) kept ſtyll the vſe of the apoſtles in mariage, and woulde not change it. Other churches receaued to lyue without mariage, by the meanes wherof many of them fallynge into further and greater incontinencie, were trapped in the ſnares of the dyuelle. Ye ſee the ſpyders, wyche be ſwellynge full with poyſone, make ſo fyne nettes, that they can ſcarſely bee ſeene, in thoſe nettes what ſo euer falleth, they kyll it with their deadely bytte. The fyrſte thynge that they aſſaulte, is the head, deſtroyenge there the ſenſes. Theſe nettes bee certayne fygures of the dyuell, and of his venomed bytynges and fyne ſnares wouen and ſet

for vs by hym with a meruaylous arte and subtiltee. Who commonly knitetth his nettes in those thynges, whiche appere more euidente, and more holly. Thus farre Faber hathe declared by this similitude, that as the spyder spynneth her webbe with muche arte, so hath the dyuell with muche arte made his snare of wyueleſſe lyke: And as the spyder maketh her threede so fyne, that it can not well be seene whan it hangeth in the lyghte, so hathe the dyuell made this snare so fyne and pleasant in the outward shewe with a face of holyneſſe, ẏ many can not well see it, although they be in the lyght of the gospell. And as the spider by the help of her fine nettes, catcheth an infinite nũbre mo than she shuld do otherwise, so ẏ diuel by ẏ help of this cloke holy snare, catcheth an ifinit nũbre of soules, more thẽ he shuld do otherwise. So ẏ this compelled chastitee (most vnworthy

the

the name of chastitee) mai right wel bee called one of the diuelles chiefe huntyng nettes. If a man calle to remembrance the churche of the old tyme, wherin it was laufull for preestes and other ecclesiasticall minysters to marye, and compareth it to the churche that is nowe adays, he shall fynde in that churche, citees, townes, countreyes, desertes, euery where replenyshed with a wyllynge chastnesse and continencie of solitarye lyuers, of clarkes and of laye men, or that gaue theim selues to no other imbrasynges but theim ouly whiche be in chaste matrimonie. But he shall fynde the churche nowe adaies, which is bonde vnder the lawe of wiueless life and of fained chastitee, most filthily steyned with the spottes of fornication, adultery, incest, and Sodomitical abhomination.

Thus haue I declared fyrst, that mariage and preesthode may stande togi-

togyther.

And than that mariage is no hinderance to a godly lyfe.

Thyrdely, that the apostles dyd not put away their wyues after the tyme they were called to the preachynge of the gospell.

Fourthly, that no preist may put away his wyfe, vnder the pretence of religion. And that that vse was fyrste broughte in by the bysshope of Rome.

And last of all, that a preist may marry, after that he hath receaued the order of preisthode.

Nowe remaineth onely to be answered the obiection of the bowe, whiche is bothe fondly and wrongfully layd to all such prestes charge as wer neuer professed to any other kynde of rule, than to the only order of preisthode. For if it could be proued by the holy scriptures, or els by any other strong and godly reason, that secular prestes (as they be

tearmed)

tearmed) whan they be admitted to their ministration, make a vowe neuer to marry, but alwaies to liue a sole and a wiueles life, then wold I either haue yelded or answered with like reason & like authoritee in their behalfe, as the worde of god shulde haue ruled me. But seyng it can not be proued, that there is any suche vowe made by any such preest at the receuing of his charge at the byshopes hand, I can not but meruayle greatly, why the aduersaries of prestes mariages will not of a like sort yeld in their argument, their groūd beynge nothyng, and their reasons vnresonable. Let the very self same booke be iudge in this cause, wherwith the byshope vseth to geue orders, and it shall appeere to the whole worlde, that neyther the byshop maketh any request of an vnmaried lyfe to the preest in gyuyng hym orders, neyther yet promysseth the prieste an vnmaryed lyfe in

receā-

receauynge theim. This sentence, Accipe iugum castitatis, Take the yoke of chastitee, Is not in all the whole boke: whiche hath not withstandynge been alwaies bothe commonly and wrongfully alleged as a matter of weight, but it hath this sentēce: Accipe iugum domini, Take the yoke of the Lorde: whiche maketh nothing for the proofe that preestes shulde liue sole, but that they shuld liue godly. Yet for this saying wrong alleged, preestes haue been chalenged for votaries, as though they had made a solemne profession neuer to enter into the holy state of matrimony. & o ỹ this reason hath ben so cōmon, and so cōmonly published by ỹ aduersaries of mariage & the proctors of bowes, ỹ almost the rudest in a coūtrei can redily obiect it, takig it to be a very strōg & an insoluble argumēt. wherfore I thought good to admonish such as here tofore haue bē by this reson seduced

that

that they shal no more credyte their wrong allegaciõs with, whom thei be wont to enchaũt the eares of the vnlearned. Yet bicause this appeareth but a slender solucion for the defence of them, which haue in religion withoute question vowed openly, to lyue sole all the dayes of their lyfe. I haue wyshed that som learned man wold take the paynes to resolue the vnlearned sorte touchyng that poynt, who myght open to them somwhat of the matter, that they should not esteme it so heinous a thynge as they dooe, that a man whiche hathe vowed to lyue all his life sole, should in conclusion marry notwithstanding his vowe. But seyng my wishyng taketh no such effecte, as my wyll was it shoulde, I thought good to leaue of wyshyng and fall to writyng in that poynte, when I see few or none els wyll.

True it is, that it can not be proued by scripture, that any Christen man

preest

preest or other can make anye suche
vowe of sole lyfe, whiche he can not
reuoke agayne when it shall please
God to call him to a contrary state,
and yet is the contrary opinion de-
fended as though ther were nothing
more trew. The place of scripture
which is now most alleged to proue
the strengthe of the vowe by, is in
the fyrst to Timothe the first epistle 1. Timo. 5.
where Paule sayeth: The wydowes
bee subiecte to the slauuder of the
worlde, because they haue broken
their former promise. If it be grau-
ted that Paul in this place speketh
of vowes, which thing is in questi-
on, and then afterwarde the same
place be well wayed, it wyll appeare
that he geueth a determinate sen-
tence, that all vowes of sole lyfe be
of none effect which be made vnder
the age of threscore yeares. For the
texte hath these wordes. Non minor
annis sexaginta, Not vnder thage of
threscore yeares. By the ordre then

that ſcripture openeth in this place, all bowes of ſole lyfe that be made before that age, bee voyde and of none effecte, becauſe they bee not agreable to the woorde of God. It is euident that Paule in this place wylled Timothie not to credyte the yonger ſorte in their vowynge, but adviſed him to obiecte vnto theym their youth & their wanton courage increaſing in them that were vnder that age, & ſo to put them of, and to confute them, as it is playne by the vſyng of the Greke woorde, παραιτοῦ, which ſignifieth, confute. So that hee alloweth not the vowe of the yonger huſwiues, but willeth them to marrye and bryng fooꝛthe chyldren, continewynge in the hollye ſtate of matrimony, that the aduerſaryes of the Goſpell ſhoulde haue no iuſt occaſion to be offended with their trade of liuyng, who woulde otherwyſe bee readye to teſte and rayle vpon them, in caſe thei ſhulde

repent

repent theym, and marrye contrarye to their former determinacion.

This note of inconstancy, Paule foresawe that it shoulde be a blotte to the wydowes whiche were chosen to bee fedde of the Congregacion, not easye to be wyped awaye, but that euer they shoulde bee subiecte for it, to the obloqui and accusacion of the people. And for that cause Paule sayde, that they were

ἔχουσαι κρίμα, habentes iudicium, 1.Tim.5.

meanynge thereby not the condemnacion before GOD, but the reproche and iudgement of the world.

To auoyde thys inconuenience Paule admonyshed Timothye to refuse suche as wouldc shew to bee founde of the Congregacion before the forenamed age, saiyng: Iuniores reiice, Admit none of the yōger sort, for feare God shuld be dishonoured by such as had professed his name. Foralmuche, then as the bowe (if ye wyll so call it) or the promyse of

ſuche as make promyſe of ſole lyfe,
before the age of threſcore yeres, is
1. Tim. 5. againſt thordre that Paule (indued
with the ſpirit of god) dyd preſcribe,
it muſt neades be graunted, that all
ſuche bowes be voyde and of none
effect. But it may peraduenture be
obiected of ſome, ſuch as wyl not be
anſwered, that we ought not to call
agayne our bowe, if we make it be-
fore the age of threſcore, bycauſe
Pſal. 75. the ſcripture ſayeth: Vouete & red-
dite Domino, Vowe and rendre it to
the Lorde. This obiection is thus
anſwered, that we be bounde to ren-
der the thing that we vow, accordig
to the ordre appoynted in ſcripture,
if we perceaue the thynge to ſtande
with the pleaſure and glory of God
and the ordre of his woorde. But
it is alleaged that Paule woulde
not haue any vow of ſole lyfe alow-
ed for good, before the age of three
ſcore yeres. Then he that breaketh
the vow of ſole life made before that
tyme

tyme, breaketh no bowe, that is to say, no Christian bowe, but a wycked and a diuelysh bow, bycause it was made contrary to the ordre appoynted in the woorde of God.

It must neades be granted, that all our doynges must haue a respect to the glory of God, and the rule prescribed in hollye scriptures. If we bowe or promyse any thyng otherwyse, then this rule ruleth vs, wee be bownde to vndooe the thynge agayne that we haue done. Euen as the wyfe was bownde to vnuowe agayn that thing, whervnto her husbande woulde not consent. And as the seruaunt to vnbow agayne that thyng, whervnto the maister would not consente. And as the chylde, to vnbowe agayne that thynge whervnto his father would not consent: So bee wee bownde to vnbowe agayne that thynge, wherevnto we perceaue in our selfe by lackyng of the gyfte that our heauenly father Num. 30.

doth not consent. In this mynde it is plain that S. Cipzian was when he willed the virgins, who had pzomysed to lyue a sole lyfe, to marry, if they perceyued not the gyfte gyuen vnto them so to contynew, as it appeareth in the .xi. Epistle of his first booke in these wozdes: Quod si se ex fide Christo dicauerunt, pudice & caste sine vlla fabula perseuerent. Si autem perseuerare nolunt, vel non possunt, melius est ut nubant q̃ in ignem delitijs suis cadant. Certe multum fratribus aut sororibus scandalum faciant. Cyprian.

That is to say: If it so be that thei haue faythfully dedicated them selues to Chzist, let them so withoute fainyng, chastly and reuerently contynew. But if so be, that either they wyll not oz can not so continew, it is better foz theim to marrye, then that they shoulde fall to burnynge with their pleasures. Truely they ought not to be the occasion of any offence to their bzothers oz systers.

By

By these woordes it is playne that Saynt Cyprian had not his eye set so muche vpon the vowe that the maydens hadde made, as vpon the glory of God, that he should not be dishonoured, nor the congregacion offended with their followyng vnlawfull lustes and desyres: for that cause he wylled the virgins whiche had vowed, and other woulde not, or could not continue, to vnsai their vowe agayne & marrye. Further it shoulde seme by the scriptures, that none such as marry after their vow for voidynge of fornication, breake their vow, but kepe it: & that mai be proued thus. S. James in the. iiii. chap. of his Epi. giueth an exceptiō to all christen men, which exception must be either expressed or eis vnderstanded in all their vowes, bargaynes, & promyses: in so much that it can not be a christē vow, nor a godly bergayne, vnlesse this exception be either expressed or included in it. Iaco. 4.

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This exception is, Si deus voluerit, yf God wylle. This exception was in Paules promise, whan he promised to go into Spayn. This exceptiō was also in Peters promise, whā he said to our sauiour, Non lauabis mihi pedes in æternum, Thou shalt neuer washe my fete: elles shuld Paul haue broken his promyse, in that he wente not into Spayne: and Peter shuld haue broken his promyse like wyse, in that he suffered Christe to washe his feete. Yet this exception (yf God wyll) beyng included, neyther of them bothe brake their promyses, bycause God called theim otherwayes for the larger settynge forth of his glory, and so they both were excused. Of a lyke sorte that godly man what so euer he be, that maketh a vowe to lyue a sole lyfe without maryage, and perceaueth in processe of tyme that God calleth hym to a contrarye vocation, he is bounde to saye as Christe sayd, Not

Rom. 15.

as

as I wyl, but as thou wylt, O hea- Math.26.
uēly father. Then if this man mar-
ry, he breketh not his bowe, because
it included this exception, Si Deus
uoluerit, If god wil. The same thing
hathe a glose in the Decrees, that
these generall conditions, Si Deus
voluerit: si vixero: si potero, If God
wyll, if I lyue, if I can, be included
in all bowes and othes, so that all
suche as can iustly challenge the ex-
ception, maie not be impeached as
breakers of their bowe or bargain.
This exception Paul forgat not in
the. vii. chapt. the first epistle to the 1. Cor. 7.
Corinthiās, spekyng in the cōmen-
dation of the vnmaried lyfe, for as
soone as he perceaueth hym selfe to
haue spoken any thyng ernestly for
the stablishment of a sole life, by and
by he calleth agayne the Corinthi-
ans to this exception, willyng them
to sette theyr eyes vpon the wyll of
God, & to examine them selues whe-
ther they be so called or not, and so

to trie whether God be pleased with their lyfe or not, if not, Propter stu-
.Cor.7. pra vitãda, suam quisq; vxorem habeat, & suum quæq; virum, For the aduoi-dyng of fornication, let euery man haue his wyfe, and euery womã hir husband. And afterwarde whan he had wyshed all men to be as he is, in cõtinent he referreth them al again to this exception, that is to saye, to the will and pleasure of god, & putteth them in mynde of their vocation, wherin it is the will (saieth he) and plesure of God, that thei shuld walke, chargyng suche as haue not the gyft of sole lyfe to marry, with these woordes, Si non continent, con-
Ibidem. trahant matrimonium, If thei can not refraine, let theim marry. As who shulde saie, if they feele them selues hable to cõtinue, without mariage, so to continue, if not, to marrye in
Ibid. the Lorde. Vnusquisq; vt illum vocauit Dominus, ita ambulet, Lette euery man walke acordingly as the Lord hath

hath called hym, referring them alwaies to the callyng, will & pleasure of the Lord. Sundry like exceptiõs he hath in the same chapiter, which I leaue out, desyrous to bee shorte. Nowe than whan this sentence, Vouete & reddite domino, Vow, & render it to ỹ Lord, is alleged agaynst thẽ, who hath vowed a sole life, to restrain thẽ frõ mariage, must be ioyned with this exceptiõ, Si deus voluerit, If god wil: and the spirit of god must giue testimony to the conscięce of mã that hath so vowed, whether he perceaue by the stirrynge of his flesche, ỹ god hath so called hym or not. And whã we haue knowlege by the testimony of our consctence, that god hath not indued vs wt a power to liue in single life wout danger of burnyng in desires, we may be well assured, ỹ god is not contẽt we shuld remain in ỹ state, but ỹ he wold haue vs chãge our state, & walk after his will. It is none excuse wherwith to aun= Psal. 75.

aunſwere the lorde whan he calleth vs to mariage, to ſaie, forſoothe O Lorde, I haue made a vowe neuer to marry, and therfore I can not fo low thy callynge, as by this ſimili= tude it maie apere. Whā the kinges maieſtie calleth his ſubiect forth to take harneis and weapon, to go im= mediately to the ſea coaſt for the de= fence of his countrey, is it ſufficiēt excuſe for the ſubiect to ſai, Forſoth ſir, I can not nor wyll not come be= cauſe of a promiſe ꝑ I haue made to abide within the walles of my hous and neuer to go out all the daies of my life? Thinke ye not, but that if a prince had a nūbre of ſuch ſubiectes he were wel manned? Such ſubiec= tes apere rather to take vpon theim the partes of their princes, thē of o= bedient ſubiectes, in that thei wyll folow their own determinatiō, & not the mynd of their prince. Euē ſo the mā which refuſeth to marry whē the ſpirite of god aſcertaineth his cōſci=

ence

ence, ỹ he can not liue otherwise, doeth disobey god, in that he foloweth hym not what tyme he calleth hym. God must not be indented withall: we must waite vpō his calling, and not he vpon our bowyng. We must serue him with a free spirite in liber tee, indifferent to what state of lyfe it shall please hym frome tyme to tyme to appoint, and not in the state of lyfe, which we fashion to our selues. You will saie peraduenture, we may haue this gifte for the askyng, and than wyll ye bryng in, Petite & accipietis, quærite, & inuenietis, pulsate & aperietur vobis, Aske, & ye shall haue, seke, and ye shall fynd, knocke & it shalbe opened vnto you. True it is, that ye shal haue the gift of sole life for the askynge, yf it be the will of God to gyue it you. But many tymes he wylleth not that thynge that you woulde, he onely knoweth what thyng is good for vs, & what is not. We many tymes aske that thyng

Math. 7. Luc. 11.

thing, that is not mete for vs, in the iudgement of God, whiche to our blind iudgement semeth most conuenient. As whan we desire worldely ryches at goddis hand, or victory in battayle, or delyuerance out of captiuitee, or plentie of vitayls in the tyme of dearth, and suche like. Many tymes it chãceth ỹ god graũteth not these our petitions, bycause he knowith ỹ it shalbe more for his glorie & our profite not to graũt them. Euen so, if the gifte of syngle life be desyred at his hand, he giueth it not to all men: Non omnes capiunt verbũ hoc, All men receaue not this word: and therfore the Lorde hath taught vs to saie in our praiers, Fiat volũtas tua, Thy will be fulfilled. Not as we wyll, but as he wyll. And yet is it true, that if we aske, we shal haue: but what shal we haue? forsoth what so euer it shall please hym to geue, and not what so euer it shall please vs to aske. And therfore Iohn saith in his

Math. 19.

Math. 6.

in his first epistle, Hęc est fiducia quã habemus apud deum, ꝙ si quid petierímus secundũ volũtatem eius, audit nos, This is the truste that we haue in God, that if we aske hym any thyng accoꝛdyng to his will, he hereth vs. The mother of the chyldꝛen of Zebede, had no graũt of her petition, bicause it stode not with the wil and plesure of God: So that although it be true, aske & ye shall obteyn, she asked and obteyned not, because her request had not a relation to the wil and pleasure of God, who geueth sundꝛy gyftes as it shal please hym, and as he thynketh mete and conuenient foꝛ them that call vpon hym. As touchig things ẏ he hath cõmãded, he denieth them to no man, but thynges indifferent sometymes he gyueth, sometyme he denieth at his pleasure. To some he giueth riches ẏ they shuld help the pooꝛe: to some he geueth pouertie, to exercise thẽ in hope: to som he giuith helth, to laboꝛ foꝛ

1. Ioan. 5.

Math. 20.

for them that be in afflictiō, to some he geueth sykenes to exercyse them with pacience, and so furth: to some he geueth the gyfte to lyue without a wyfe, and to some he denyeth the same gyft, and them Paule willeth by commaundement to marry.

In case ther be one that liue in continency, yet sinneth he not although he doe marrye, as the handfastyng of the blessed virgin Mary to Joseph beareth wytnesse, although she had the gyfte. In that poynt Paul woulde not take vpon him to commaunde, but to counsell only. And S. Augustine sayeth, that suche offende not in maryeng, but in forsakyng their former purpose. In case there be any that hath not the gyfte of sole lyfe, they synne if they mary not. Si non continent nubant, If thei can not forbeare, let them marrye. God byddeth not man fast, if he can in no wyse without daunger of sicknesse abstayn. God byddeth not mā

bowe continencye, yf he can in no wyse without daunger of burnyng in desyre, lyue without the company of a woman. God byddeth not man take purgacions and poticarye ware for medecyns agaynst the burnyng, he geueth no other medecyne but this one only, Si non continent, contrahant matrimonium. Et, Propter stupra uitanda, suã quisq; uxorem habeat, & suũ quæq; uirum habeat. That is, If they can not refrayne, let theim marry. And, For the auoidyng of whoredome, let euery man haue his wyfe, and euerye woman haue her husbande. Trew it is, that the gyft of continencye is a gyfte of God, more excellent then is the gyfte of matrimony, but to whome I praye you? to him that can not lyue without the company of a woman? no. A charger full of golde is better then a charger full of meate, but to whō I pray you? to him which is so hungrye, that he can not tarry one mo-

ment of an houre without daunger of death for lacke of meate, and can make no other shifte but the same only: no. Then must we not couet the thyng which is without our reche, but be contēt with our callyng, as Moyses, who spake with God face to face, & all the Patriarches, and all the Apostles were, & a great nōbre of holy men mo, whiche were maried: namely as Abraham was, of whō thus writeth S. Augustine:

Exod. 33.

De bono viduitat.

Propterea tenuit coniugij castitatem, quia non potuit ampliorem. That is to say: Therfore he helde him to the chastitie of marriage, bicause he had not the greater gift. And shortly after in the same treatyse: Res ergo ipsas si comparemus, nullo modo dubitandū est, meliorē esse castitatē continentiæ, cū castitatem nuptialē, cū tamen utrumq; sit bonum. Homines uero cū comparam⁹, ille est melior, qui bonum amplius cū alius habet. That is to say: If wee compare the thynges theim selues

Ibidem.

selues togither, there is no question but that the chastitie of continency is better then matrimoniall chastitie, and yet neuerthelesse they both be good: but when we compare the menne togyther, he is the better, whiche hathe more goodnesse then the other hathe. And although he whiche hathe the gyfte of chaste continencye, is noted of Saynte Austustine to bee better then he, who hathe the gyfte of chaste maryage: Yet maye he whiche hathe the baser gyfte, bee as good (euen by the aucthoritie of Sayncte Augustine) as the other holye menne that enioyed the greater gyfte, and lyued sole without mariage.

It foloweth not. Jhon the Euangeliste hadde the gyfte to lyue a continent lyfe, ergo, euerye man that wyll, maye so dooe: no more then it followeth, Sampson was hable to take vp vpon hys backe the gaates of a Citee, poastes

and all, and carry theim away vnto a hyll: ergo, euerye man that wyll, maye so dooe. Euerye man is not streyghte waye made a Jhon or a Sampson, that is to say, continent or mighty, with willynge. Suche vowes therefore bee temerous and vnaduysed vowes, although they bee neuer so aduisedly made, when the vower hathe not respecte to the power, whiche he hathe receaued at Goddes hande, for the performaunce of that his vowe. Who wouide not accompte that man vnwyse, and his vowe also folysh, that wouide vowe, neuer to eate fyshe all the dayes of his lyfe, when God hath so framed his appetite, that he can eate nothyng elles: or neuer to drinke water, when he can drinke nothyng elles: of the whiche properties there be some in Englande: or neuer to marrye, when he canne not lyue continent, but burneth continually in fleshely desyres: Be not

these

these and suche lyke bounde to vn=
vowe with aduisement, that thyng
which thei vowed to their owne vn=
dooynge vnaduisedly? And be not
these and suche lyke vowes against
Goddes holye wooꝛde, who wylleth
euery man to walke accoꝛdingly as
the Loꝛde hath called him? God cal-
leth that mā who hath not the gyft
of cōtinency, to mariage, The vow
calleth the same mā from it. Is not
the vow then an aduersary to God?
God sayeth yea: The vowe sayeth
naye: Whom ought we to follow?
The vowe sayeth: although ye can
not absteyne, yet oughte ye not to
marry. God sayeth: Si nō continent,
contrahant matrimonium, If thei can
not lyue chast, let thē mary. It must
neades then be confessed, that that
man, which after this soꝛt reasoneth
with him selfe, and in conclusion foꝛ
saketh his vow (a thyng of his own
makyng) and followeth Chꝛist, lo=
ueth Chꝛist better then him selfe, &

acknowlegeth Chriſt to be his maiſter. And contrariwyſe, that man whyche forſaketh the callynge of Chriſt, and followeth his vowe, loueth hym ſelfe better than Chriſte, and acknowledgeth his vowe to be his maiſter, acordyng to the ſayeng of Paule: Eius ſerui eſtis, cui obeditis. Rom. 6. Ye be his ſeruãtes, whom ye obey. If the vowe then ſtay any man frõ maryage, it is a token that his vow was wyckedly made, without the exception before mencioned, or els woulde he neuer staye for anye reſpecte to his vowe. And ſcripture is a wytneſſe, that ſuche men be fallen frome grace, bicauſe they wyll bee vnder a lawe, whan Chriſt hath ſette theym at lybertie. That vowynge is a doctrine not taught by Chriſte, but inſtytuted by the onely ordynaunce of the Churche, as in the Sexte it dooeth appeare, where it is ſayde: Extra li. 3. De voto Voti ſolemnitas ex ſola conſtitutione Eccleſiæ eſt inuenta,

uenta, matrimonij vero vinculum, ab ipso ecclesiæ capite rerum omnium conditorem ipsum in paradiso & in statu innocentiæ instituente vnionem & indissolubilitatem acceperit: That is to saye, The solempnes of the vow was deuysed by the onely Constitution of the Churche, but the bonde of matrimonie toke his vnseparable vnytynge and knotte of Chriſte hym selfe, whyche is the head of the Churche, and maker of all thynges. So that the vowe is but an ordynance of man, and martyage the ordynance of God. *& voti redempt. Quod votum.*

Wherefore, if wee wyll refuse Mariage beynge the ordinaunce of GOD, bycause of our vowe, which is the Ordinaunce of Man, maye not Chriſte saye vnto vs: Ye worshyp me in vayne, teachyng the doctrines and cõmaundementes of men? Yes trulye. And stycknge to this our vowe, wee breake *Math. 15. Marc. 7.*

our promise made in baptisme, wher we vtterly renounce and forsake all other thynges, in helle, earthe, and heauen, and gyue our selues wholly and onely to God, commyttynge the wholle tuition and gouernance of vs to him, promysing him faith and truthe, that he shall dooe with vs, not what pleaseth vs, but what pleaseth hym. Nowe whan we, by a vowe, promyse this or that kynde of lyfe, whyche is not commaunded in Goddes woorde, without exceptyng, goddis wyll and pleasure, we take vpon vs to gouerne our selfe after a fashion, not of goddes, but of our owne deuisynge, reuokynge and callyng agayn our former promyses, whyche wee made to hym in baptysme, and so we take vpon vs to serue God after our owne fashion: But how wycked and vngodly a thynge it is so to dooe, all godly men can easily geue sentence. The ignorant sorte whiche haue not yet tasted

taſted of the ſpirite of God, would ſooner iudge, that marriage ſhould rather bee broken for the vowes ſake, than the vowe for the mariage ſake. And yet is there a decree wherein theſe woordes bee conteyned, Tanta eſt vis in ſacramento coniugij, ꝙ nec ex violatione uoti, poteſt diſſolui ipſum coniugium, that is to ſay, Suche a ſtrengthe is in the ſacrament of matrimonye, that it maye not bee diſſolued for ỹ breakyng of the vowe. And ſayct Auguſtine in his booke De bono viduitatis, ſpeakynge of theim, whyche haue forſaken theyr former pourpoſe, and marryed afterwarde, ſayth, Proinde qui talium nuptias dicunt non eſſe nuptias, ſed potius adulteria, non mihi videntur ſatis accurate & diligenter cõſiderare quid dicant, that is, Therfore they ỹ ſay, that the mariages of ſuche men bee no marriages, but rather adultery, appere not to me dilygentely to waye the thynge that they

Decret. diſt. 27. diaconus.

Auguſtin.

they saie. And Gratian citeth an o-
ther place out of saynct Augustine,
whiche hath the very same sentence
Disti.27. in effect, Quidam nubentes post votũ,
c4.Quidã asserunt adulteros esse,ego autẽ dico vo
bis q̃ grauiter peccant qui tales diuidũt,
that is to sai, Som say,that such as
mari after their vow,be adulterers:
but I say,ẏ they syn heinously whi-
ch diuide such as haue maried after
their vowe. These and suche like sen
tẽces beyng found in the doctours,
declare their opinion,that the stren-
ghte of matrimony is of more force,
than is the strengthe of the vowe.
Howe be it, al this wyl not serue the
vngodly,who cesse not to mayntayn
manfully the strength of their vow,
and woulde haue holly matrimo-
ny to be called whoredom, for mai-
stresse vowes plesure. Yet wel worth
Paphnutius, who was not afrayde
to confesse openly in Nicene coũsel,
that mariage was honourable in al
states, & that the companieng of the
hus-

husbād with his own wife, was chastitee. So that it shoulde appere he was of the opiniō, that matrimony, kept as it ought to be, was one kīd of chastitee, euen as virginite is an other, both the which kindes of chastite, be the giftes of God, & no more in our power to perfourme the gifte of them to god, (vnles he geue them to vs first) then it is in our power to perfourme the gifte of all the frenche kynges iewels to the kyng our maister, onles he fyrst geue vs them. In dede I might perfourme my promise so made to the kynge our master, yf ani promise did include this exceptiō (if the frēche king wil geue thē me: or if I can get them) and euē so may I perfourme my vow made to god of sole like, if it include the chriſtē exception, that is to say, if ỹ giuer of that gifte will geue it me, or if god be so pleased, without whiche exception, all vowes be wicked, all promyses be vayn, and al bargains vngodly.

And

AND to make an ende in ſtede of a recitall of thoſe thynges whyche I haue ſpoken, I will knyt vp the matter with this breeke reaſon. No vowe whiche hath this exception (yf God wyll) other expreſſed or included, byndeth any man that hath not the gyft of ſole lyfe, to abſteyne from the holly ſtate of matrimony. But al chriſtian vowes haue this exception (if god will) other expreſſed or included, Ergo, no chriſtē vow bindeth any man to abſtein frō the holly ſtate of matrimony. The partes of this ſyllogiſme be proued in my former proceſſe to hym that wyll wylfyngly waie it. Wherefore it ſhuld be but a folly to make more matter whan enough wyl ſerue, as no doubte it wyll, to them that wyll be ſatisfied. If there be any whom nothyng wyll ſerue, I beſeeche the lyuyng lorde to ſoften theyr hartes, whan it ſhall be his pleaſure, to his moſte heauenly glory. Amen.

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Sap. 8.

¶ Whan I perceaued that I coulde not kepe my selfe chaste, excepte GOD gaue it me (and that it was a poynte of wysedome also, to knowe whose gyfte it was) I stepped vnto the Lorde, and besought hym &c.